Andrea Salvo

Professor Noonan

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Reflection- FAE Chapters 2 & 3

Memorization has always been an area of opportunity for me; I never could remember my twelve tables, and to this day, I cannot name each of the fifty states and their capitals. As a voracious reader with an innate insight around human behavior, I was a thoughtful and analytical student, preferring assignments of comprehension and classroom discussion over mathematical formulas and Spanish vocabulary lists. Consequently, I experienced great difficulty throughout my formative years when tasked to assimilate concepts requiring memorization over conception.

Then I met Dr. Carlos, my eighth grade social studies teacher. A dignified, towering, sober man, he was a middle school teacher by day and a college professor by night. My brother, Sam, had been a student of Dr. Carlos five years prior, and spoke very highly of his capability and his character; as a result, I chose to reject the overwhelming consensus among the student body which characterized Dr. Carlos as inflexible, inept and iniquitous.

Dr. Carlos based his teaching strategy on a concept he called the R.O.S.E. method: Read, Organize, Summarize, and Explain. He believed that comprehension, not memorization, was an effective strategy for learning. When we were tasked to read a chapter in our history book, we would use the R.O.S.E. method; after organizing our notes, we would summarize the key ideas and explain our interpretation of events. For open-minded students who were willing to invest the time and effort, the result was a remarkable understanding of our nation’s history.

Dr. Carlos’ class was not easy for me. I spent a considerable amount of time reading and taking notes according to his method. Yet one of the proudest moments I’ve ever had as a student came from Dr. Carlos using one of my chapter outlines as an example for his college students. His validation and approval meant more to me than an A ever could.

Dr. Carlos infused meaning into each lesson, and strove to relate our history to our current reality. He always said that, “History is the best indicator of the future,” and he did his best to illustrate this point using notable, historical events.

David McCullough stated, “We can’t function in a society if we don’t know who we are and where we came from.” The author of our text adds that, “The solemn duty of all educators is to make certain that our children know who they are. Part of that can be accomplished by teaching them about America’s founders, about their ideals, and about the character, courage, vision, and tenacity with which they acted. From that inspiring history, true patriotism cannot help but grow.”

I believe that the lack of knowledge around our history is a critical contributing factor to the disconnection we see in our classrooms. Most students do not comprehend the “ideals… character, courage vision, and tenacity…” of our predecessors. Patriotism and passion for the greater good has been replaced by apathy and commercialism. Educating to advance society has been replaced by educating to advance test scores. I saw an incredible manifestation of commitment to our society and education in Socrates’ decision to choose death over losing his right to teach. What if each of us today acted with such dedication?

In the end, many students did not pass Dr. Carlos’ class. In fact, I recently saw many former students on a social networking sight criticizing not only his teaching ability, but also his moral fiber. I proudly said my peace to defend the character of a man who taught me many key lessons: the value of history and its relevance to our present and future state, as well as the importance of comprehension in mastering every facet of education.